

**REMARKS**

Claims 18-34 are currently pending in the present Application.

Claims 1-20 and 22-34 are noted in the September 17, 2004 Office Action as allowed. For clarity in the record, the Applicants note that claims 1-17 were canceled in the Preliminary Amendment filed on November 15, 2000.

The remaining pending claim 21 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as indefinite as reciting an “axial stop” in a manner contradicting its parent claim 18. The Applicants respectfully submit that claim 21 does not contradict claim 18.

In the last subparagraph of claim 18, the Applicants recite a sealing ring configuration in which a shoulder of the elastomer ring is enclosed by three elements: “the peripheral shoulder being enclosed by the supporting ring, and the seal carrier and an axial stop being arranged on the peripheral shoulder.” As an example, these three elements are shown in Fig. 1 in the following positions:

- (i) supporting ring (element 28): the radially outer enclosure;
- (ii) seal carrier (element 2): the radially inner enclosure; and
- (iii) axial stop (element 9): the axial enclosure.

The Applicants note that this embodiment demonstrates that axial stop 9 may enclose the peripheral shoulder by being positioned “on,” *i.e.*, directly in contact with, the axial face of the peripheral shoulder. Thus, when dependent claim 21 further recites that the axial stop “is arranged with a snug fit on the seal carrier,” there is no inherent conflict with claim 18 – the axial stop is in contact with the shoulder on its axial face, and with the seal carrier on its radially inner face, as shown in Fig. 1. Claim 21 therefore does not contradict claim 18.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the pending § 112, second

paragraph, rejection of claim 21 is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

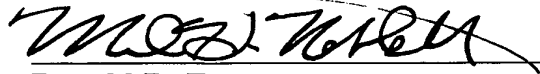
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the Applicant respectfully submits that claim 21 is in allowable form. Early and favorable consideration and issuance of a Notice of Allowance for this claim and allowed claims 18-20 and 22-34 is respectfully requested.

If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #038738.49317US).

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Respectfully submitted,



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